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AN
I D E A
OF
H A P P I N E S S,
IN A
L E T T E R
TO A
F R I E N D:

Enquiring

Wherein the Greatest Happiness attain-
able by Man in this Life does consist.

By JOHN NORRIS, Fellow of All-Souls
Colledge in Oxford.

*Sollicitis vitam consumimus annis,
Torquemurque metu cæcæque cupidine rerum,
Æternisque Senes curis dum querimus ævum,
Perdimus, & nullo votorum fine beati,
Victuros agimus semper, nec vivimus unquam.*

Manilius Lib. 4.

L O N D O N,

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THE OF HAPPINESS IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND

By

By which the Greatest Happiness attain-
able by Man in this Life does consist

By JOHN NORRIS, Fellow of the Society
of Divines in Oxford.

2d Edition, with a new Preface, and
a new Chapter, containing a new
Translation of the whole, in the
English Language, and a new
Index.

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S I R,

TH O' you have been pleas'd to assign me the Task of an Angel, and in that Respect have warranted me to disobey you; yet since a considerable part of that experimental Knowledge which I have of Happiness is owing to the Delight which I take in your virtuous and endearing Friendship, I think 'tis but reasonable I should endeavour to give you an *Idea* of that, whereof you have given me the *Possession*.

You desire to know of me wherein the greatest Happiness attainable by man in this Life does consist. And here, tho' I see my self engaged in a work already too difficult for me, yet I find it necessary to enlarge it: For since the greatest Happiness, or *Summum Bonum* of this Life is a *Species* of Happiness in general, and since it is call'd (Greatest) not because absolutely perfect and compleat; but inasmuch as it comes nearest to that which indeed is so, it will be necessary first to state the Notion of Happiness in General, and then to define wherein that Happiness does consist which is perfect and compleat, be-

fore I can proceed to a Resolution of your Question.

By Happiness in the most general Sence of the word, I understand nothing else but an Enjoyment of any Good. The least Degree of Good has the same Proportion to the least Degree of Happiness as the greatest has to the greatest, and consequently as many ways as a man enjoys any Good, so many ways he may be said to be happy: neither will the Mixture of Evil make him forfeit his Right to this Title, unless it either *equals* the Good he enjoys, or *exceeds* it: And then indeed it does; but the Reason is, because in strictness of Speaking upon the whole Account the man enjoys no Good at all: For if the Good and the Evil be equal-balanc'd, it must needs be indifferent to that man either to be or not to be, there being not the least *Grain* of good to determine his Choice: So that he can no more be said to be happy in that Condition, than he could before he was born. And much less, if the Evil exceeds the Good: For then he is not only not happy, but absolutely and purely miserable: For after an exact Commensuration supposed between the Good and the Evil, all that remains over of the Evil is pure and simple Misery; which is the Case of the Damn'd: And when 'tis once come to this (whatever some
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Mens *Metaphysicks* may perswade them) I am very well satisfied, that 'tis better not to be than to be. But now on the other side, if the Good does never so little out-weigh the Evil, that *Over-plus* of Good is as pure and unallay'd in its Proportion, as if there were no such Mixture at all; and consequently the Possession of it may properly be call'd Happiness.

I know the Masters of Moral Philosophy do not treat of Happiness in this Latitude; neither is it fit they should: For their Business being to point out the ultimate End of Humane Actions, it would be an impertinent thing for them to give any other *Idea* of Happiness than the highest: But however this does not hinder but that the General *Idea* of Happiness may be extended farther, even to the Fruition of any Good whatsoever: Neither is there any reason to find Fault with the Latitude of this Notion, since we acknowledge Degrees even in Glory.

In this General *Idea* of Happiness two things are contain'd. One is some Good, either real or apparent, in the Fruition of which we are said to be in some measure or other happy. The other is the very Fruition it self. The first of these is usually called *Objective Happiness*, and the latter *Formal*. Some I know divide Happiness into these as distinct *Species*; but I think not so
artifici-

artificially : For they are both but constituent Parts, which joyntly make up one and the same Happiness : Neither of them are sufficient alone, but they are both equally necessary. That the last of these is a necessary Ingredient, I think no doubt can reasonably be made : For what would the greatest Good imaginable signifie without Fruition ? And that the former is likewise necessary is no less certain : For how can there be such a thing as Fruition without an Object ? I grant 'tis not at all necessary that the Object be a real substantial Good ; if it appear so 'tis sufficient.

From this Distinction of *real* and *apparent* Good, some have taken occasion to distinguish of Happiness likewise into two sorts, *real* and *imaginary* : But I believe upon a more narrow Scrutiny into the matter, 'twill be found, that all Happiness, according to its Proportion, is equally *real* ; and that that which they term *Imaginary*, too well deserves the Name, there being no such thing in Nature : For let the Object of it be never so *Phantastick*, yet it must still carry the Semblance and Appearance of Good (otherwise it can neither *move* the Appetite nor please it, and consequently be neither an Object of *Desire* nor of *Fruition* ;) and if so, the Happiness must needs be real, because the
Formality

Formality of the Object, tho' 'twere never so true and real good, would notwithstanding lie in the *Appearance*, not in the *Reallity*: Whether it be real or no is purely accidental: For since to be happy can be nothing else but to enjoy something which I desire, the Object of my Happiness must needs be *enjoy'd* under the same Formality as 'tis *desired*. Now since 'tis desired only as apparently good, it must needs please me when obtained under the same Notion. So that it matters not to the Reality of my Happiness, whether the Object of it be really good, or only apprehended so, since if it were never so *real*, it *pleases* only as *apparent*. The Fool has his Paradise as well as the wise man, and for the time is as happy in it; and a kind Delusion will make a Cloud as pleasing as the Queen of *Heaven*. And therefore I think it impossible for a man to think himself happy, and (during that Perswasion) not really to be so. He enjoys the *Creature* of his own Fancy, worships the *Idol* of his Imagination, and the happiest man upon Earth does no more: For let the Circumstances of his Life be what they will, 'tis his Opinion only that must give the Relish. Without this Heaven it self would afford him no Content, nor the Vision of God prove *Beatifick*. 'Tis true, the man is seated at the *Spring-Head* of Happiness, is surrounded

rounded with excellent Objects ; but alas, it appears not so to him ; he is not at all affected with his Condition, but, like *Adam*, lies fast in a dead Sleep in the midst of *Paradise*.

The Sum of this Argument is this ; Good is in the same manner the Object of *Fruition*, as 'tis of Desire ; and that is not as *really* good in its own Nature, but as 'tis *judged* so by the Understanding : And consequently, tho' it be only apparent, it must needs be as effectual to *gratifie* the Appetite as it was at first to *excite* it during that Appearance. So long as it keeps on its Vizard and imposes upon the Understanding, what is wanting in the thing, is made up by an *obliging* Imposture, and *Ignorance* becomes here the Mother of *Happiness* as well as of *Devotion* : But if the man will *dare* to be wise, and too curiously examine the superficial Tinsel-Good, he deceives himself to his own Cost, and, like *Adam*, adventuring to eat of the Tree of *Knowledge*, sees himself naked, and is ashamed. And for this reason I think it impossible for any man to love to be flatter'd : 'Tis true, he may delight to hear himself commended by those who indeed do flatter him ; but the true Reason of that is, because he does not apprehend that to be Flattery which indeed is so ; but when he once thoroughly knows it, 'tis impossible he should be
any

any longer delighted with it. I shall conclude this Point with this useful Reflection, That since every Man's Happiness depends wholly upon his own Opinion, the Foundation upon which all envious Men proceed, must needs be either *false* or very *uncertain*. False, if they think that outward Circumstances and States of Life are all the Ingredients of Happiness; but uncertain however: For since they measure the Happiness of other Men by their own Opinion, 'tis mere Chance if they do not misplace their Envy, unless they were sure the other Person was of the like Opinion with themselves. And now what a vain irrational thing is it to disquiet our selves into a dislike of our own Condition, merely because we mistake an other Man's?

Thus far of the Notion of Happiness in General; I now proceed to consider that Happiness which is *ὅλως καὶ ὁλόκληρον*. (as *Plato* speaks) sound and entire, perfect and compleat. Concerning the general Notion of which, all men, I suppose, are as much agreed as they are in the *Idea* of a *Triangle*. That 'tis such a State then which a better cannot be conceiv'd: In which there is no Evil you can fear, no Good which you desire and have not: That which fully and constantly satisfies the Demand of every Appetite, and leaves no possibility for a desire of Change; or to sum

it up in that comprehensive Expression of the Poet,

Quod sis esse velis, nihilque malis.

When you would always be what you are, and (as the Earl of Roscommon very significantly renders it) do *Rather* nothing. This I suppose is the utmost that can be said or conceiv'd of it, and less than this will not be enough. And thus far we are all agreed. For I suppose, the many various Disputes maintained by Philosophers concerning Happiness, could not respect this general Notion of it, but only the particular *causes* or *means* whereby it might be acquired. And I find *Tully* concurring with me in the same Observation, *Ea est beata vita* (says he) *quærimus autem non quæ sit, sed unde*. The difficulty is not to frame a conception of a perfectly happy State in the general, but to define in particular wherein it consists.

Lib. 3 de
Fin.

But before I undertake this Province, I think it might not be amiss to remove one Prejudice, which because it has gain'd upon my self sometimes in my Melancholy Retirements, I am apt to think it may be incident to other men also. It is this, Whether after so many Disputes about, so many restless endeavours after this state of perfect Happiness there be any such thing or no. Whether it be not a meer *Idea*, as imaginary as *Plato's*

Common-

Common-wealth, as fictitious as the Groves of *Elysium*. I confess, this suspicion has oftentimes *overcast* my mind with black thoughts, damp'd my Devotion, and as it were clipp'd the wings of my Aspiring Soul. And I happened to fall into it upon a serious reflection on the nature of Fruition in the several Periods and Circumstances of my life. For I observ'd according to my *Narrow* experience, that I never had in all my life the same thoughts of any good in the very time of the enjoying it as I had before. I have known when I have promised my self vast Satisfactions, and my imagination has presented me at a distance with a fair *Landscape* of Delights, yet when I drew nigh enough to grasp the alluring Happiness, like the *Sensitive Plant* it contracted it self at the touch, and *shrink'd* almost to nothing in the Fruition. And though after the Enjoyment is past, it seems great again upon *reflection* as it did before in *expectation*, yet should a *Platonical Revolution* make the same Circumstances recur, I should not think so. I found 'twas ever with me as with the *Traveller*, to whom the ground which is *before* him, and that which he has left *behind* him seems always more curiously embroider'd and delightful, then that which he *stands* upon. So that my Happiness like the time wherein I *thought* to enjoy it, was always either *past* or *to come* never

present. Methought I could often say, upon a *Recollection*, How happy *was* I at such a time! Or when I was in *expectation*. How happy *shall* I be if I compass such a design! But scarce ever, I *am* so. I was pretty well pleased methought while I expected, while I hoped, till Fruition jogg'd me out of my pleasing slumber and I knew it was but a Dream. And this single Consideration has often made me even in the very pursuit after Happiness, and full career of my Passions, to stop short on this side of Fruition, and to choose rather with *Moses* upon Mount *Nebo* to entertain my fancy with a remote Prospect of the *Happy Land*, then to go in and possess it, and then *repine*. How then shall man be happy when setting aside all the Crosses of Fortune, he will complain even of *Success*, and *Fruition* it self shall *disappoint* him!

And this melancholy reflection bred in me a kind of suspicion, that for all that I knew it might be so in *Heaven* too. That although at this distance I might frame to my self bright *Ideas* of that Region of Bliss; yet when I came to the possession of it, I should not find that perfect Happiness there which I expected, but that it would be always to *come* as 'tis now, and that I should seek for Heaven even in Heaven it self. That I should not fully acquiesce in my condition there, but at length desire a change. And that which confirm'd me the
more

more in this *unhappy Scepticism*, was because I consider'd that a great number of excellent Beings who enjoy'd the very *Quintessence* of Bliss, who were as happy as God and Heaven could make them, grew soon uneasy and weary of their State and *left their own Habitation*. Which argues that their Happiness was not *perfect* and *compleat*, because otherwise they would not have *desired* a change, since that very desire is an imperfection. And if Happiness be not compleat in Heaven, sure 'tis impossible to be found any where else.

Before therefore I proceed to define wherein perfect Happiness does consist, I think it necessary to endeavour the removal of this Scruple which like the flaming Sword forbids *entrance* into *Paradise*. In order to which, I shall inquire into the *true reason* why these Sublunary good things when enjoy'd do *neither* answer our *expectations*, nor satisfy our *Appetites*. Now this must proceed *either* from the nature of Fruition it self, or from the imperfection of it, or from the Object of it, or from our selves. I confess, did this *defect* proceed from the *very nature* of Fruition (as is supposed in the Objection) 'tis impossible there should be any such thing as *perfect Happiness*, since 'twould *faint away* while enjoy'd, and *expire* in our *embraces*. But that it cannot proceed thence, I have this to offer, Because Fruition being nothing else but

but an Application or Union of the Soul to some good or agreeable Object, it is impossible that should *lessen* the good enjoy'd. *Indeed* it may lessen our *estimation* of it, but that is because we do not rightly consider the nature of things, but promise our *selves* infinite Satisfaction in the *enjoyment* of finite Objects. We look upon things through a false Glass which magnifies the Object at a distance much beyond its just Dimensions. We represent our *future enjoyments* to our selves in such *favourable* and *partial Ideas* which abstract from all the *inconveniencies* and allays which will really in the *event* accompany them. And if we thus over-rate our *Felicities* before-hand, 'tis no wonder if they baulk our *Expectations* in the *Fruition*. But then it must be observ'd that the *Fruition* does not *cause* this *Deficiency* in the Object, but only *discover* it. We have a better insight into the nature of things near at hand, then when we stood afar off, and consequently discern those *defects* and *imperfections* which like the qualities of an ill Mistress, lay hid all the time of *Courtship*, and now begin to betray themselves, when 'tis come to *enjoyment*. But this can never happen but where the Object is finite. An infinite Object can never be over-valued and consequently cannot frustrate our *expectations*.

And

And as we are not to charge *Fruition* with our *disappointments* but our selves (because we are accessory to our own *delusion* by taking false measures of things) so neither is the *Unsatisfactoriness* of any condition to be imputed to the Nature of *Fruition* it self, but either to the *imperfection* of it or to the finiteness of the Object. Let the Object be never so perfect, yet if the *Fruition* of it be in an imperfect measure there will still be room for *Unsatisfactoriness*, as it appears in our *enjoyment* of God in this Life. Neither can a *finite Object* fully satisfy us though we enjoy it never so thoroughly. For, since to a full satisfaction and *acquiescence* of mind 'tis required that our Faculties be always *entertain'd* and we ever *enjoying*: it is impossible a *finite Object* should afford this satisfaction, because all the good that is in it (being finite) is at length run over, and then the *enjoyment* is at an end. The flower is suckt dry, and we necessarily desire a change. Whenever therefore our *enjoyment* proves unsatisfying, we may conclude, that either the Object is *finite*, or the *Fruition* imperfect. But then how came the *Angels* to be dissatisfy'd with their Condition in the Regions of *light* and *immortality*, when they drank freely of the *Fountain of Life* proceeding out of the Throne of God, with whom is fulness of Joy, and at whose Right hand are *Pleasures for evermore*. Here certainly there is

Revul. 26.

no room either for the *finiteness* of the *Object*, or the *imperfection* of *Fruition*. And therefore their dissatisfaction can be imputed to no other Cause, then the Nature of *Fruition* in general, which is to *lessen* the good enjoy'd, as was suppos'd in the *Objection*. This I confess presses hard, and indeed, I have but one way to *extricate* my self from this difficulty, and that is by supposing a *State of Probation* in the *Angels*. That they did not immediately upon their *Creation* enjoy an *infinite Object*, or if they did, yet that 'twas in an *imperfect measure*. For should it be granted that they were at first confirm'd in Bliss and *completely happy* both in *respect* of *Fruition* and *Object* as we suppose they are now, I cannot *conceive* it possible they should be dissatisfy'd with their condition. This being repugnant to the *Idea* of *Perfect Happiness*.

Since then this dissatisfaction must be derived either from the imperfection of the *Fruition*, or the finiteness of the *Object*, and not from the Nature of *Fruition* in the general, to infer the possibility of perfect *Happiness*, there needs no more to be supposed then the *existence* of a Being full fraught with infinite inexhaustible good, and that he is able to communicate it to the full. There may be then such a thing as perfect *Happiness*. The possibility of which may also be farther proved
(tho'

(tho' not *explicated*) from those boundless Desires, that *immortal Thirst* every man has after it by Nature: Concerning which I observe, that nothing does more constantly, more inseparably cleave to our Minds than this Desire of perfect and consummated Happiness: This, as *Plato* pathetically expresses it, is, *πρὸς τῶν πόνων τὸ καλλίστον ὁ μέγας ἀγὼν, ἢ ἑλπίς ἢ μεράλη*, the most excellent end of all our Endeavours, the great Prize, the great Hope. This is the Mark every Man shoots at, and tho' we miss our Aim never so often, yet we will not, cannot give over; but like passionate Lovers take *Resolution* from a *Repulse*. The rest of our Passions are much at our own Disposal; yield either to Reason or Time; we either argue our selves out of them, or at least out-live them. We are not always in love with Pomp and Grandeur, nor always dazzl'd with the glittering of Riches; and there is a Season when Pleasure it self shall court in vain: But the Desire of perfect Happiness has no Intervals, no Vicissitudes, it out-lasts the Motion of the Pulse, and survives the Ruins of the Grave. *Many Waters cannot quench it, neither can the Floods drown it*: And now certainly God would never have planted such an ardent, such an importunate Appetite in our Souls, and as it were *interwoven* it with our very Natures had he not been able to satisfy it.

I come now to shew wherein this perfect Happiness does consist, concerning which I affirm in the first place, that it is not to be found in any thing we can enjoy in this Life. The greatest Fruition we have of God here, is imperfect, and consequently unsatisfactory. And as for all other Objects they are finite, and consequently though never so fully enjoy'd cannot afford us perfect satisfaction. No, *Man knoweth not the price thereof: Neither is it to be found in the Land of the Living. The Depth saith, it is not in me, and the Sea saith, it is not in me.* The Vanity of the Creature has been so copiously discours'd upon, both by Philosophers and Divines, and is withal so obvious to every thinking man's experience, that I need not here take an *Inventory* of the Creation, nor turn *Ecclesiastes* after *Solomon*. And besides, I have already anticipated this Argument in what I have said concerning *Fruition*. I shall only add one or two Remarks concerning the Objects of *Secular Happiness*, which are not so commonly insisted upon, to what has been there said. The first is this, that the Objects wherein Men generally seek for *Happiness* here, are not only *finite* in their Nature, but also *few* in number. Indeed could a Man's Life be so contrived, that he should have a new *Pleasure* still ready at hand as soon as he was grown weary of the Old, and every day enjoy the Maiden-

Maiden-head of a fresh Delight, he might then perhaps, like *Mr. Hobbs* his Notion, and for a while think himself happy in this *continued Succession of new Acquisitions*. But alas, Nature does not treat us with this Variety. The compass of our enjoyments is much shorter than that of our Lives, and there is a *Periodical Circulation* of our Pleasures as well as of our blood.

—*Versamur ibidem atque insumus usque.* Lucretius.
Nec nova vivendo procuditur ulla voluptas.

The Enjoyments of our Lives run in a perpetual Round like the Months in the *Kalendar*, but with a quicker Revolution; we *dance* like *Fairies* in a *Circle*, and our whole Life is but a nauseous *Tautology*: We rise like the Sun, and run the same Course we did the day before, and to morrow is but the same over again: So that the greatest Favourite of Fortune will have Reason often enough to cry out with him in *Seneca*, *Quousque eadem?* But there is another Grievance which contributes to defeat our Endeavours after perfect Happiness in the Enjoyments of this Life: Which is, that the Objects wherein we seek it, are not only *finite* and *few*; but that they commonly prove Occasions of greater *Sorrow* to us than ever they afforded us *Content*. This may be made out several ways, as from the Labour of Getting, the

Care of Keeping, the fear of Losing, and the like Topicks, commonly insisted on by others; but I wave these, and fix upon another Account less blown upon, and I think more material than any of the rest. It is this, that altho' the Object loses that great appearance in the *Fruition* which it had in the *expectation*, yet after it is gone it resumes it again. Now we when we lament the loss, do not take our measures from that appearance which the Object had in the *enjoyment* (as we should do to make our sorrow not exceed our *Happiness*) but from that which it has in the *reflection*, and consequently we must needs be more *miserable* in the *loss* then we were *happy* in the *enjoyment*.

From these and the like *Considerations*, I think it will evidently appear that this perfect *Happiness* is not to be found in any thing we can enjoy in this Life. Wherein then does it consist? I answer positively, in the full and intire Fruition of God. He (as *Plato* speaks) is *νόον ἢ ἀρχαρχον* *της Της*, the proper and Principal End of Man, the Center of our *Tendency*, the Ark of our *Rest*. He is the Object which alone can satisfy the appetite of the most Capacious Soul, and stand the *Test* of Fruition to Eternity. And to enjoy him fully is perfect Felicity. This in general, is no more then what is deliver'd to us in Scripture, and was believ'd by many of the *Heathen Philosophers*.
But

But the manner of this Fruition requires a more particular *Consideration*. Much is said by the School-men upon this Subject, whereof in the first place I shall give a short and methodical account, and then fix upon the Opinion which I best approve of. The first thing that I observe, is, that 'tis generally agreed upon among them, that this Fruition of God consists in some *Operation*; and I think with very good reason. For as by the *Objective* part of *Perfect Happiness* we understand that which is best and last, and to which all other things are to be refer'd. So by the *Formal* part of it must be understood the best and last Habitue of Man toward that best Object, so that the *Happiness* may both ways satisfy the Appetite, that is, as 'tis the best thing, and as 'tis the Possession, use, or Fruition of that best thing: Now this Habitue whereby the best thing is perfectly possess'd must needs be some *Operation*, because *Operation* is the ultimate perfection of every Being. Which *Axiom* (as *Caietan* well observes) must not be so understood as if *Operation* taken by it self were more perfect then the thing which tends to it, but that every thing with its *Operation* is more perfect then without it.

The next thing which I observe, is, that 'tis also farther agreed upon among them, that this *Operation* wherein our Fruition of God does consist,

first, is an Operation of the *Intellectual* part, and not of the *Sensitive*. And this also, I take to be very reasonable. First, Because 'tis generally receiv'd that the Essence of God cannot be the Object of any of our Senses. But Secondly, Suppose it could, yet since this Operation wherein our *Perfect Happiness* does consist must be the perfectest Operation, and since that of the *Intellectual* part is more perfect then that of the *Sensitive*, it follows that the Operation whereby we enjoy God must be that of the *Intellectual* part only.

But now whereas the *Intellectual* part of man (as 'tis oppos'd to the *Sensitive*) is double, viz. That of the *Understanding*, and that of the *Will*, there has commenced a great Controversy between the *Thomists* and the *Scotists*, in which Act or Operation of the *Rational Soul* the *Fruition* of God, does consist, whether in an act of the *Understanding*, or in an act of the *Will*. The *Thomists* will have it consist purely in an act of the *Understanding*, which is *Vision*. The *Scotists* in act of the *Will*, which is *Love*. I intend not here to launch out into those *Voluminous Intricacies* and *Abstrusities*, occasion'd by the management of this Argument: It may suffice to tell you, that I think they are both in the extream, and therefore I shall take the middle way and resolve the perfect Fruition of God partly into *Vision* and partly into *Love*. These are the two arms with which
we

we embrace the Divinity, and unite our Souls to the *fair* one and the *good*. These I conceive are both so *essential* to the *perfect Fruition* of God, that the *Idea* of it can by no means be maintained if either of them be wanting. For *since* God is both *Supream Truth* and infinite *Goodness* he cannot be intirely possess'd but by the most clear *knowledge* and the most ardent *love*. And besides, since the Soul is happy by her Faculties, her Happiness must consist in the most perfect Operation of each Faculty. For if Happiness did consist formally in the sole operation of the *Understanding* (as most say) or in the sole operation of the *Will* (as others) the Man would not be compleatly and in all respects Happy. For how is it possible a Man should be perfectly Happy in loving the greatest good if he did not know it, or in knowing it if he did not *love* it? And moreover these two Operations do so mutually tend to the promotion and Conservation of one another, that upon this depends the perpetuity and the constancy of our Happiness. For while the Blessed do *πρὸς ὅπου πρὸς πρόσωπον*, Face to Face contemplate the *Supream Truth* and the infinite *Goodness*, they cannot chuse but love perpetually; and while they perpetually love, they cannot chuse but perpetually contemplate. And in this mutual reciprocation of the actions of the Soul consists the *perpetuity* of Heaven, the *Circle* of Felicity.

Besides

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But now whereas the *Intellectual* part of man (as 'tis oppos'd to the *Sensitive*) is double, viz. That of the *Understanding*, and that of the *Will*, there has commenced a great Controversy between the *Thomists* and the *Scotists*, in which Act or Operation of the *Rational Soul* the *Fruition* of God, does consist, whether in an act of the *Understanding*, or in an act of the *Will*. The *Thomists* will have it consist purely in an act of the *Understanding*, which is *Vision*. The *Scotists* in act of the *Will*, which is *Love*. I intend not here to launch out into those *Voluminous Intricacies* and *Abstrusities*, occasion'd by the management of this Argument: It may suffice to tell you, that I think they are both in the extream, and therefore I shall take the middle way and resolve the perfect Fruition of God partly into *Vision* and partly into *Love*. These are the two arms with which
we

we embrace the Divinity, and unite our Souls to the *fair* one and the *good*. These I conceive are both so *essential* to the *perfect Fruition* of God, that the *Idea* of it can by no means be maintained if either of them be wanting. For *since* God is both *Supream Truth* and infinite *Goodness* he cannot be intirely possess'd but by the most clear *knowledge* and the most ardent *love*. And besides, since the Soul is happy by her Faculties, her Happiness must consist in the most perfect Operation of each Faculty. For if Happiness did consist formally in the sole operation of the *Understanding* (as most say) or in the sole operation of the *Will* (as others) the Man would not be compleatly and in all respects Happy. For how is it possible a Man should be perfectly Happy in loving the greatest good if he did not know it, or in knowing it if he did not *love* it? And moreover these two Operations do so mutually tend to the promotion and Conservation of one another, that upon this depends the perpetuity and the constancy of our Happiness. For while the Blessed do *πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον*, Face to Face contemplate the *Supream Truth* and the infinite *Goodness*, they cannot chuse but love perpetually; and while they perpetually love, they cannot chuse but perpetually contemplate. And in this mutual reciprocation of the actions of the Soul consists the *perpetuity* of Heaven, the *Circle* of Felicity.

Besides

Besides this way of resolving our *Fruition* of God into *Vision* and *Love*, there is a Famous Opinion said to be *broacht* by *Henricus Gandavensis*, who upon a Supposition that God could not be so fully enjoy'd as is required to perfect Happiness, only by the *Operations* or *Powers* of the Soul, fancied a certain *Illapse* whereby the *Divine Essence* did fall in with and as it were *penetrate* the *essence* of the Blessed. Which Opinion he endeavours to illustrate by this Similitude. That as a piece of Iron red hot by reason of the *Illapse* of the fire into it appears all over like fire, so the Souls of the Blessed by this *Illapse* of the *Divine Essence* into them shall be all over *Divine*.

I think he has scarce any *Followers* in this Opinion, but I am sure he had a *Leader*. For this is no more then what *Plato* taught before him, as is to be seen in his Discourses about the *refusion* of the Souls of good men into the *Anima Mundi*, which is the self same in other terms with this Opinion. And the truth of what I affirm may farther appear from an expression of that great *Platonist Plotinus*, (*viz.*) that *the Soul will then be Happy when it shall depart hence to God, and as another and no longer her self shall become wholly his* *ἑαυτὴν αὐτῷ ὡς πρὸς κέντρον* *ἑαυτῆς ὡς πρὸς κέντρον* *having joynd her self to him as a Center to a Center.*

Enn. 6 lib.
9. cap. 10.

That

That such an intimate *Conjunction* with God as is here described is possible, seems to me more then credible from the Nature of the *Hypostatic Union*, but whether our *Fruition* of God after this Life shall consist in it, none know but those Happy Souls who enjoy him, and therefore I shall determine nothing before the time. This only I observe, that should our *Fruition* of God consist in such an Union or rather *Penetration* of *Essences* that would not exclude but rather infer those Operations of *Vision* and *Love* as necessary to *Fruition*, but on the other hand, there seems no such necessity of this Union to the *Fruition*, but that it may be conceiv'd intire without it. And therefore why we should multiply difficulties without cause, I see no reason. For my part I should think my self sufficiently happy in the clear Vision of my Maker, nor should I desire any thing beyond the Prayer of *Moses*, *I beseech thee shew me thy Glory.* Exod. 33.
18.

For what an infinite Satisfaction, Happiness, and Delight must it needs be to have a clear and intimate perception of that Primitive and Original Beauty, Perfection and Harmony whereof all that appears fair and excellent either to our *Senses* or *Understandings* in this Life is but a *faint* imitation, a *pale* Reflection! To see him who is the Fountain of all Being, containing in himself the

D perfe-

Rev. 1. 8.

perfection, not only of all that is, but of all that is possible to be, *the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty!* To see him of whom all Nature is the *Image*, of whom all the Harmony both of the visible and the invisible World is but the *Eccho!* To see him who (as *Plato* divinely and magnificently expresses it) is πολὺ πέραν τοῦ καλῆς, αὐτὸ καὶ αὐτὸ μετ' αὐτῆς μεγαλὸν αἰεὶ ὄν. The immense Ocean of Beauty, which is it self by it self, with it self, uniform, always existing! This certainly will affect the Soul with all the pleasing and ravishing Transports of Love and Desire, Joy and Delight, Wonder and Amazement, together with a settled Acquiescence and Complacency of Spirit only less infinite than the *Loveliness* that causes it, and the peculiar Complacency of him who rejoices in his own fulness, and the *Comprehensions* of Eternity. We see how strangely our sense of *Seeing* is affected with the Harmony of *Colours*, and our sense of Hearing with the Harmony of Sounds, insomuch that some have been too weak for the enjoyment, and have grown mad with the *Sublimate* of Pleasure. And if so, what then shall we think of the *Beatific Vision*, the pleasure of which will so far transcend that of the other, as God who is all over Harmony and Proportion exceeds the sweetest Melody of Sounds and Colours, and the perception of the Mind is more

more vigorous quick and piercing then that of the Senses? This is *Perfect Happiness*, this is the Tree of Life which grows in the *midst* of the *Paradise* of God, this is Heaven, which while the Learned dispute about, the good only enjoy. But I shall not venture to Soar any longer in these Heights, I find the *Æther* too thin here to breath in long, and the Brightness of the Region flashes too strong upon my tender sense; I shall therefore hasten to descend from the Mount of God, lest I grow *giddy* with speculation and lose those Secrets which I have learnt there, the *Cabala* of Felicity.

And now (Sir) I come to consider your Question (*viz.*) Wherein the greatest Happiness attainable by man in this Life does consist. Concerning which, there is as great variety of Opinions among *Philosophers*, as there is among *Geographers*, about the Seat of *Paradise*. The learned *Varro* reckons up no less then 288 several Opinions about it, and yet notwithstanding the number of Writers who have *bequeath'd* Volumes upon this Subject to Posterity, they seem to have been in the dark in nothing more then in this, and (excepting only a few *Platonists* who placed Mans greatest End in the Contemplation of truth) they seem to have undertaken nothing so *unhappily*, as when they essay'd to write of *Happiness*. Some measure their *Happiness* by the high-tide of their Riches, as

the *Egyptians* did the Fertility of the Year by the increafe of the River *Nile*. Others place it in the Pleasures of Sence, others in Honour and Greatness. But these and the like were Men of the common Herd, low groveling Souls that either *understood* not the *Dignity* of Humane Nature, or else forgot that they were Men. But there were others of a *Diviner Genius* and *Sublimier Spirit*

Queis meliore luto finxit præcordia Titan.

Who had a more generous blood running in their Veins, which made them put a just value upon themselves, and scorn to place their greatest *Happiness* in that which they should blush to enjoy. And those were the *Stoics* and the *Peripatetics* who both place the greatest *Happiness* of this Life in the Actions of Virtue, with this only difference, that whereas the former are contented with *Naked Virtue*, the latter require some other *Collateral* things to the farther *accomplishment* of *Happiness*, such as are Health and Strength of Body, a Competent Lively-hood, and the like.

And this Opinion has been subscribed to by the hands of *eminent Moralists* in all Ages. And as it is Venerable for its Antiquity, so has it gain'd no small Authority from the Pen of a great Modern Writer (*Descartes*) who resolves the greatest *Happiness* of this Life into the right use of the *Will*, which consists in this, that a Man have a firm and constant

constant purpose always to do that which he shall judge to be best.

I confess, the Practice of Vertue is a very great instrument of *Happiness*, and that there is a great deal more true satisfaction and solid content to be found in a constant course of well living then in all the soft Caresses of the most studied *Luxury*, or the Voluptuousness of a *Seraglio*. And therefore I have oftentimes been exceedingly pleased in the reading of a certain Passage in that Divine Moral-ist *Hierocles*, where he tells you, that the Vertuous Man lives much more pleasantly then the Vicious Man. For (says he) *all Pleasure is the Companion of Action, it has no Subsistence of its own, but accompanies us in our doing such and such things. Hence 'tis that the worser Actions are accompanied with the meaner Pleasures. So that the good Man does not only excel the wicked Man in what is good, but has also the advantage of him even in Pleasure, for whose sake alone he is wicked. For he that chuses Pleasure with Filthiness, altho for a while he be sweetly and deliciously entertain'd, yet at last through the Filthiness annexed to his enjoyment, he is brought to a painful Repentance. But now he that prefers Vertue with all her Labours and Difficulties, though at first for want of use it sits heavy upon him, yet by the Conjunction of good he alleviates the labour and at last enjoys pure and unallay'd Pleasure with his*
Vertue.

Vertue. So that of necessity that Life is most unhappy, which is most wicked, and that most pleasant which is most vertuous.

Now this I readily submit to as a great truth, that the degrees of *Happiness* vary according to the degrees of *Vertue*, and consequently that that Life which is most *Vertuous* is most *Happy* with reference to those that are Vicious or less *Vertuous*, every degree of *Vertue* having a proportionate degree of *Happiness* accompanying it, (which is all, I suppose, that excellent Author intends.) But I do not think the most *Vertuous* Life so the most *Happy*, but that it may become *Happier* unless something more be comprehended in the Word (*Vertue*) than the *Stoics*, *Peripatetics*, and the generality of other Moralists understand by it. For with them it signifies no more but only such a firm *Resolution* or habitude of the Will to good, whereby we are constantly disposed, notwithstanding the contrary tendency of our Passions to perform the necessary Offices of Life. This they call *Moral* or *Civil* *Vertue*, and although this brings always *Happiness* enough with it to make ample amends for all the difficulties which attend the practice of it: Yet I am not of Opinion that the greatest *Happiness* attainable by Man in this Life consists in it. But there is another and a higher sense of the Word which frequently occurs in the
Pythagorean

Pythagorean and *Platonic* Writings, (*viz.*) *Contemplation* and the *Unitive* way of Religion. And this they call *Divine Vertue*. I allow of the distinction, but I would not be thought to derive it from the *Principle*, as if Moral Vertue were *acquired*, and this *infused* (for to speak ingeniously infused Vertue seem'd ever to me as great a *Paradox* in *Divinity*, as Occult qualities in *Philosophy*) but from the nobleness of the Object, the Object of the former being Moral good, and the Object of the latter God himself. The former is a State of *Proficiency*, the latter of *Perfection*. The former is a State of difficulty and contention, the latter of ease and Sincerity. The former is employ'd in mastering the Passions, and regulating the actions of common life, the latter in Divine Meditation and the Extracies of *Seraphic Love*. He that has only the former is like *Moses* with much difficulty climbing up the Holy Mount, but he that has the latter is like the same Person conversing with God on the serene top of it, and shining with the Rays of *Anticipated Glory*. So that this latter supposes the acquisition of the former, and consequently has all the *Happiness* retaining to the other, besides what it adds of its own. This is the last *Stage* of *Humane Perfection*, the utmost round of the Ladder whereby we ascend to *Heaven*, one *Step* higher is *Glory*. Here then will I build my
Tabernacle,

Tabernacle, for it is good to be here. Here will I set up my Pillar of Rest, here will I fix, for why should I travail on farther in pursuit of any greater *Happiness*, since Man in this Station is but a little lower than the *Angels*, one remove from *Heaven*. Here certainly is the greatest Happiness as well as Perfection attainable by Man in this State of imperfection. For since that Happiness which is absolutely perfect and compleat consists in the clear and intimate *Vision* and most ardent *Love* of God, hence we ought to take our Measures and conclude that to be the greatest Happiness attainable in this State, which is the greatest participation of the other. And that can be nothing else but the *Unitive* way of Religion, which consists of the *Contemplation* and *Love* of God. I shall say something of each of these severally, and something of the *Unitive* way of Religion which is the result of both, and so shut up this Discourse.

By *Contemplation* in general (*θεωρεω*) we understand an application of the *Understanding* to some truth. But here in this place we take the word in a more peculiar sense, as it signifies an habitual attentive steady application or conversion of the Spirit to God and his Divine Perfections. Of this the Masters of *Mystic Theology* commonly make fifteen Degrees. The first is Intuition of Truth, the 2 is a Retirement of all the Vi-
gour

gour and strength of the Faculties into the innermost parts of the Soul, the 3 is Spiritual Silence, the 4 is Rest, the 5 is Union, the 6 is the hearing of the still Voice of God, the 7 is Spiritual Slumber, the 8 is Ecstasy, the 9 is Rapture, the 10 is the Corporal Appearance of Christ and the Saints, the 11 is the Imaginary Appearance of the same, the 12 is the Intellectual Vision of God, the 13 is the Vision of God in obscurity, the 14 is an admirable Manifestation of God, the 15 is a clear and intuitive Vision of him, such as *St. Austin* and *Tho. Aquinas* attribute to *S. Paul* when he was rapt up into the third Heaven. Others of them reckon seven degrees only, (*viz.*) Taste, Desire, Satiety, Ebriety, Security, Tranquility, but the name of the seventh (they say) is known only to God.

I shall not stand to examine the *Scale* of this Division, perhaps there may be a kind of a *Pythagoric* Superstition in the number. But this I think I may affirm in general that the Soul may be wound up to a most strange degree of *Abstraction* by a silent and steddly *Contemplation* of God. *Plato* defines *Contemplation* to be λύσις ἢ χωρισμός τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος, a Solution and a Separation of the Soul from the Body. And some of the severer *Platonists* have been of Opinion that 'tis possible for a Man by mere *intention* of thought not only

to withdraw the Soul from all commerce with the Senses, but even really to separate it from the Body, to *untwist* the Ligaments of his Frame, and by degrees to *resolve* himself into the State of the Dead. And thus the *Jews* express the manner of the Death of *Moses*, calling it *Osculum Oris Dei*, the *Kiss of God's Mouth*. That is, that he breath'd out his Soul by the mere strength and Energy of *Contemplation*, and expired in the Embraces of his Maker. A Happy way of Dying! How ambitious should I be of such a conveyance, were it practicable? How passionately should I joyn with the Church in Canticles? φιλοστομω με ἀπὸ φιλη-

Ver. 2. ἡμῶν στόματι σου, *Let him kiss me with the Kisses of his Mouth.*

But however this be determin'd, certain it is, that there are exceeding great Measures of *Abstraction* in *Contemplation*, so great, that sometimes whether a Man be in the Body or out of the Body, he himself can hardly tell. And consequently the Soul in these *Preludiums* of Death, these *Neighbourhoods* of Separation must needs have *brighter* glimpses and more *Beatific Ideas* of God, than in a State void of these *Elevations*, and consequently must *love* him with greater Ardency. Which is the next thing I am to consider.

The love of God in general may be consider'd either as it is purely *intellectual*, or as it is a *Passion*.
The

The first is when the Soul upon an apprehension of God as a good delectable and agreeable Object joyns her self to him by the Will. The latter is when the motion of the Will is accompany'd with a sensible Commotion of the Spirits, and an estimation of the blood. Some I know are of Opinion, that 'tis not possible for a man to be affected with this sensitive Love of God which is a *Passion*, because there is nothing in God which falls under our imagination and *consequently* (the imagination being the only Medium of conveyance) it cannot be propagated from the Intellectual part to the Sensitive. Whereupon they affirm that none are capable of this sensitive passionate love of God but Christians who enjoy the *Mystery* of the *Incar-nation* whereby they know God has condescended so far as to cloath himself with flesh, and to become like one of us. But 'tis not all the *Sophistry* of the *old Logicians* that shall work me out of the belief of what I feel and know, and rob me of the sweetest entertainment of my Life, the *Passionate Love of God*. Whatever some Men pretend who are strangers to all the affectionate heats of Religion, and therefore make their Philosophy a Plea for their indevotion, and extinguish all Holy Ardours with a *Syllogism*; yet I am firmly persuaded that our love of God may be not only passionate, but even *Wonderfully* so, and exceeding the

Love of Women. 'Tis an *Experimental* and therefore *undeniable* Truth, that *Passion* is a great Instrument of *Devotion*, and accordingly we find that Men of the most warm and pathetic *Tempers* and *Amorous Complexions* (Provided they have but Consideration enough withal to fix upon the right *Object*) prove the greatest *Votaries* in *Religion*. And upon this account it is, that to heighten our Love of God in our Religious *Addresses*, we endeavour to excite our Passions by *Music*, which would be to as little purpose as the *Fanatic* thinks 'tis, if there were not such a thing, as the *Passionate Love of God*. But then as to the *Objection*, I Answer with the excellent *Descartes*, that although in God who is the *Object* of our Love, we can imagine nothing, yet we can imagine that our Love, which consists in this, that we would unite our selves to the *Object* beloved, and consider our selves, as it were a part of it. And the sole *Idea* of this very Conjunction is enough to stir up a heat about the Heart, and so kindle a very *vehement Passion*. To which I add, that although the *Beauty* or *aimableness* of God be not the same with that which we see in *Corporeal Beings*, and consequently cannot directly fall within the *Sphere* of the Imagination, yet it is something *Analogous* to it, and that very *Analogy* is enough to excite a *Passion*. And this I think sufficient to warrant my general division

sion of the Love of God into *Intellectual* and *Sensitive*.

But there is a more *peculiar Acceptation* of the Love of God proper to this place. And it is that which we call *Seraphic*. By which I understand in short, that Love of God which is the effect of an intense *Contemplation* of him. This differs not from the other in kind, but only in *degree*, and that it does *exceedingly*, in as much as the thoughtful *Contemplative* Man (as I hinted before) has clearer *Perceptions* and livelier *Impressions* of the *Divine Beauty*, the lovely *Attributes* and *Perfections* of God, then he whose Soul is more deeply set in the *Flesh*, and lies groveling in the *bottom* of the *Dungeon*.

That the Nature of this *Seraphic Love* may be the better understood, I shall consider how many *degrees* there may be in the Love of God. And I think the Computation of *Bellarmin* is accurate enough. He makes four. The first is to Love God proportionably to his *Loveliness*, that is, with an *infinite Love*; and this *degree* is peculiar to God himself. The second is to Love him, not proportionably to his *Loveliness*, but to the utmost Capacity of a *Creature*, and this *degree* is peculiar to *Saints* and *Angels* in *Heaven*. The third is to love him not proportionably to his *Loveliness*, nor to the utmost capacity of a *Creature*,

Lib. 2. de
monachis,
cap. 2.

ture absolutely consider'd, but to the utmost capacity of a *Mortal Creature* in this *Life*. And this (he says) is proper to the *Religious*. The fourth is to love him not proportionably to his *Loveliness*, nor to the utmost capacity of a *Creature* consider'd either absolutely or with respect to this *Life*, but only so as to love nothing equally with him or above him. That is, not to do any thing contrary to the *Divine Love*. And this is absolute indispensible duty, less then which will not qualify us for the *enjoyment* of God hereafter.

Now this *Seraphic Love* which we here discourse of is in the third degree: When a Man after many degrees of *Abstraction* from the *Animal Life*, many a profound and steddly Meditation upon the *Excellencies* of God, sees such a vast *Ocean* of *Beauty* and *Perfection* in him, that he loves him to the utmost *Stretch* of his Power. When he sits under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet to his *Tast*. When he *Consecrates* and *Devotes* himself wholly to him, and has no *Passion* for *Inferiour Objects*. When he is ravish'd with the *delights* of his *Service*, and breaths out some of his Soul to him in every *Prayer*. When he is delighted with *Anthems* of *Praise* and *Adoration* more then with *Marrow* and *Fatness*, and *Feasts* upon a *Hallelujah*. When he melts in a *Calenture* of *Devotion*,
and

and his Soul breaketh out with fervent Desire. When Psal. 119.
the one thing he *delights* in is to converage with God
in the *Beauty of Holiness*, and the one thing he *desires*
to see him as he is in Heaven. This is *Seraphic Love*,
and this with *Contemplation* makes up that which the
Mystic Divines stile the *Unitive* way of Religion.
It is call'd so because it Unites us to God in the most
excellent manner that we are capable of in this Life.
By Union here I do not understand that which is
Local or *Presential*, because I consider God as
Omnipresent. Neither do I mean a Union of Grace
(as they call it) whereby we are reconciled to God,
or a Union of Charity whereof it is said, *he that dwelleth in Love*
dwelleth in God and God in him. Jo. 4. 16.
The first of the being as common to the inanimate things
as to the most *Extasied* Soul upon Earth. And the two
last being common to all good men who indeed love
God, but yet want the *excellency* of *Contemplation*
and the *Mystic Union*. The Union then which I
here speak of is that which is between the *Faculty*
and the *Object*. Which consists in some *Habitude*
or *Operation* of one toward the other. The *Faculties*
here are the *Understanding* and *Will*, the *Object*
God, and the *Operations* *Contemplation* and *Love*.
The result of which two is the *Mystic Union*.
Which according to this complex Notion of it that I
have here delivered, is thus most admirably

The great
Exemplar
pag. 60.

mirably represented by the excellent Bishop Taylor. *It is (says he) a Prayer of quietness and silence and a Meditation extraordinary, a Discourse without variety, a Vision and Intuition of Divine Excellencies, an immediate entry into an Orb of light, and a resolution of all our Faculties into Sweetness, Affections and Starings upon the Divine Beauty. And is carried on to Extasies, Raptures, Suspensions, Elevations, Abstractions and Apprehensions beatifical.*

I make no doubt but that many an honest Pious Soul arrives to the heavenly *Canaan* who is not fed with this *Manna* in the *Wilderness*. But though every one must not expect these *Antepastis* of Felicity that is vertuous, yet none else must. *Paradise* was never open but to a State of *Innocence*. But neither is that enough. No, this Mount of God's presence is fenced not only from the *profane* but also from the *Moderately* vertuous. 'Tis the Priviledge of Angelical Dispositions, and the reward of *eminent Piety* and an excellent Religion to be admitted to these *Divine Repasts*, these *Feasts of Love*. And here I place the greatest Happiness attainable by Man in this Life, as being the nearest Approach to the State of the Blessed above, the *Outer Court* of Heaven.

These (Sir) are my thoughts concerning Happiness. I might have *spun* them out into a greater length, but I think a little Plot of ground *thick-sown*

sown is better then a great Field which for the most part of it lies Fallow. I have endeavour'd to deliver my Notions with as much perspicuity and in as good Method as I could, and so to answer all the ends of *Copiousness*, with the advantage of a shorter Cut. If I appear singular in any of my Notions 'tis not out of an industrious affectation of Novelty, but because in the composing of this discourse (the Meditation of a few broken hours in a Garden) I consulted more my own experimental Notices of things and private *Reflections* then the Writings of others. So that if sometimes I happen to be in the Road, and sometimes in a way by my self, 'tis no wonder. I affect neither the one nor the other, but write as I think. Which as I do at other times, so more especially when I subscribe my self

Sir,

Yours most affectionately,

J. N.

Allsouls Colledge
Apr. 18. 1683.

F I N I S.

now is better than a great Field which for the most
part of the Fallow. I have endeavour'd to de-
liver my Notions with as much brevity and in-
conspicuousness as possible.

**Books Printed for James Norris, this pre-
sent Year, 1683.**

M *Assinetho*, or a Satyr against the Association
of Novels, and the *Guill-Hall* Riot, 4

Eromena, or the Noble Stranger, a Novel. 8^o

*Tractatus Adversus Reprobationis Absoluta decre-
tum Nova Methodo & Succinctissime Compendio ador-
natus*; in duos Libros Digestus. 8^o

This in
Latin is Writ by the same Author of the *Idea of
Happiness*, and these Books are Translated by the
same Author out of Greek and Latin into English,
(viz.)

Effigies Amoris, or the Picture of Love Un-
veil'd, 12^o

Hierocles upon the Golden Verses of the Py-
thagoreans, 8^o